

# Celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Newburyport Superior Court Courthouse

Newburyport Superior Court  
September 16, 2005

Remarks of Hon. Robert A. Mulligan  
Chief Justice for Administration and Management

Today, we mark the two hundred year history of the Newburyport Superior Court Courthouse. What inspires us to celebrate this occasion?

Certainly, the building itself, designed by Charles Bullfinch, spare and functionally efficient, beautifully situated on the Bartlett Mall by the Frog Pond, is striking even to the passing observer. In the tradition of the Superior Court, a new judge is entrusted at induction with the history of his inherited seat. Presiding at this historic courthouse emphatically reinforced the implicit obligation to transfer that seat upon retirement with its reputation enhanced.

Each one gathered here projects on this courthouse a personal reflection of its significance. I believe that the warm feeling we have for venerable courthouses, the rationale for our celebration here today, is that we share the common hope, the belief, that each courthouse represents the promise of justice. Yet, we all appreciate that the promise of justice will not be realized, is squandered, unless the courthouse is occupied by individuals who are committed to ensuring that justice is, in fact, delivered. We take it on faith that those who have labored here over the past two hundred years have been so committed.

I am informed that Rufus Choate, whose oversized gilt statue occupies a prominent place in the Great Hall of the John Adams Courthouse in Boston, tried cases here in this well. Given the documents and records preserved in Essex County, we can probably determine who presided at those trials. But, I doubt that we could learn who assembled the trial list, who notified Rufus Choate of his trial date, who summoned the jurors, who prepared a

perfectly inscribed judgment and execution, and who posted that document to Mr. Choate.

This day, in courthouses across the Commonwealth, from here to Cambridge to Taunton to New Bedford, from the easternmost courthouse in Orleans to the westernmost courthouses in Great Barrington and Pittsfield, court employees work selflessly and anonymously to ensure that quality justice is delivered, that the process is fair, and that the judgment is just.

We can identify the judges who preside at these courthouses, but we would be hard pressed to identify by name the others who are essential to delivering justice – the clerks and registers, who manage courthouse activities; their assistants, who schedule cases and coordinate the sessions; the clerical staff, who, in so many ways, support court operations; the court reporters, who faithfully record proceedings; the court officers, who maintain order and safety in the courtrooms; the associate court officers, who provide front-door security; the probation officers, who carefully supervise and creatively support probationers in the community; and the maintenance personnel and custodians, who work diligently, often in aging facilities, to provide a safe, clean and dignified environment for the delivery of justice.

Parenthetically, as to the state of our physical facilities, I must heartily commend the Romney administration, Lieutenant Governor Healey, and DCAM Commissioner Perini for their unprecedented commitment to new courthouse construction and their unrelenting efforts to improve conditions in existing facilities. And, of course, courthouse construction and improvement cannot be accomplished without the support of the Legislature.

Today, I know that I join with everyone here in an expression of appreciation to those dedicated, extraordinary employees who work in Newburyport and in the other one hundred and nine courthouses across the Commonwealth. For indeed, it is their daily commitment to performing their work as perfectly as possible in every detail, which leads us to believe that the promise of justice, symbolized by this historic courthouse, is realized here and in the other courthouses across the Commonwealth.

As we celebrate the two hundred year tradition of this historic courthouse, it is fitting and it is just that we also celebrate those employees of the Massachusetts Trial Court whose industry, patience, and dedication contribute so significantly to the delivery of justice. This wonderful occasion provides us a special opportunity to do so.